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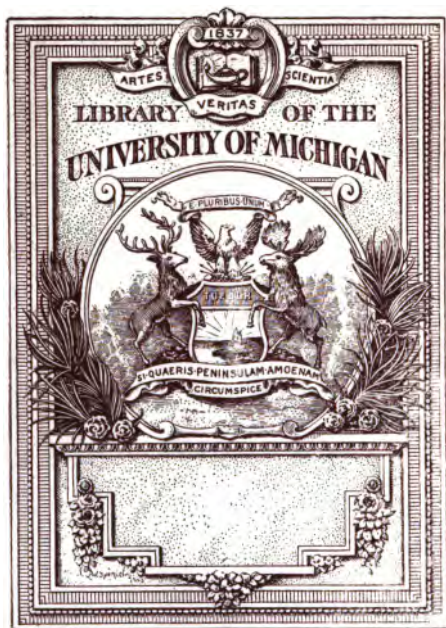
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THE HAPPY PRINCESS

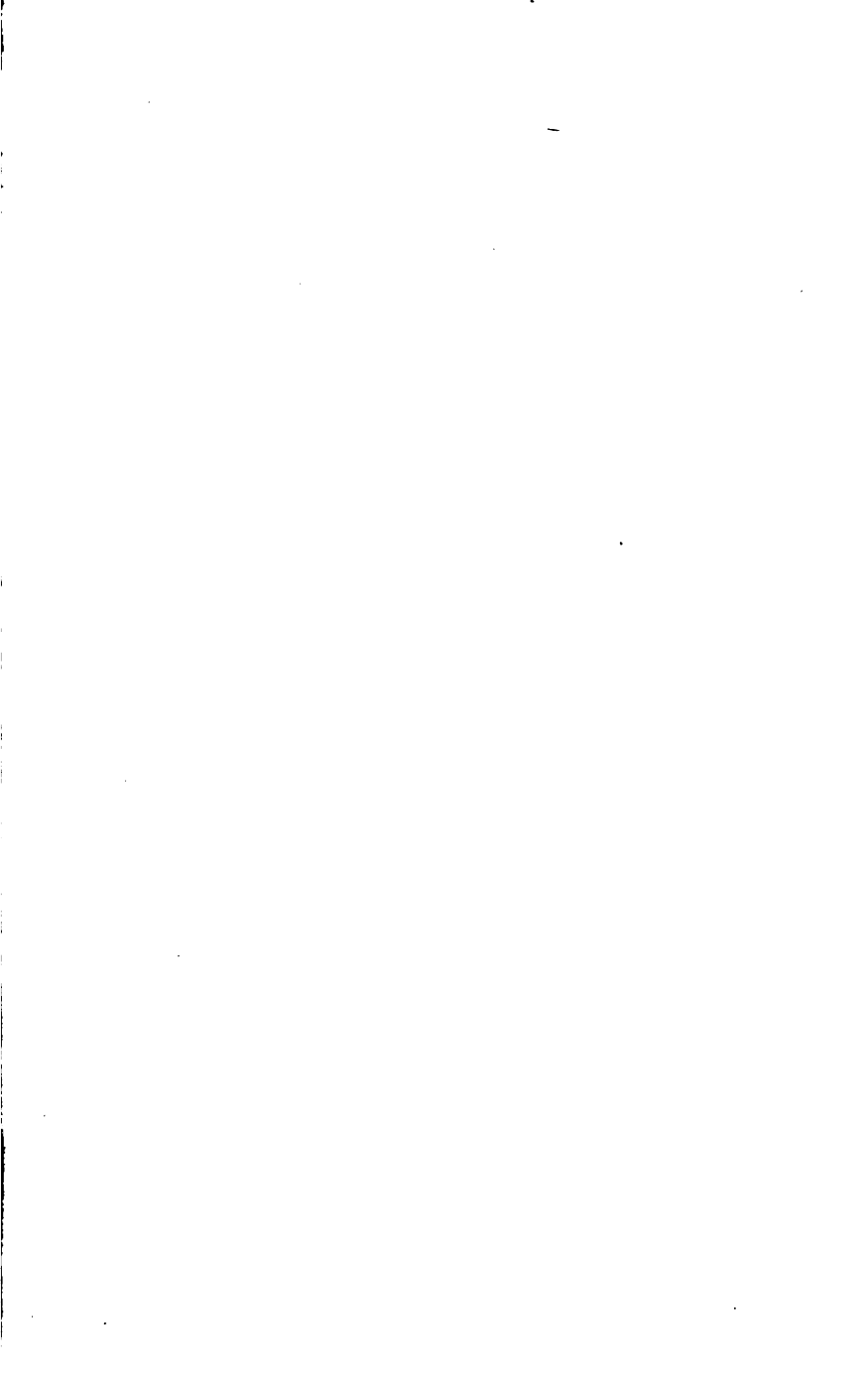


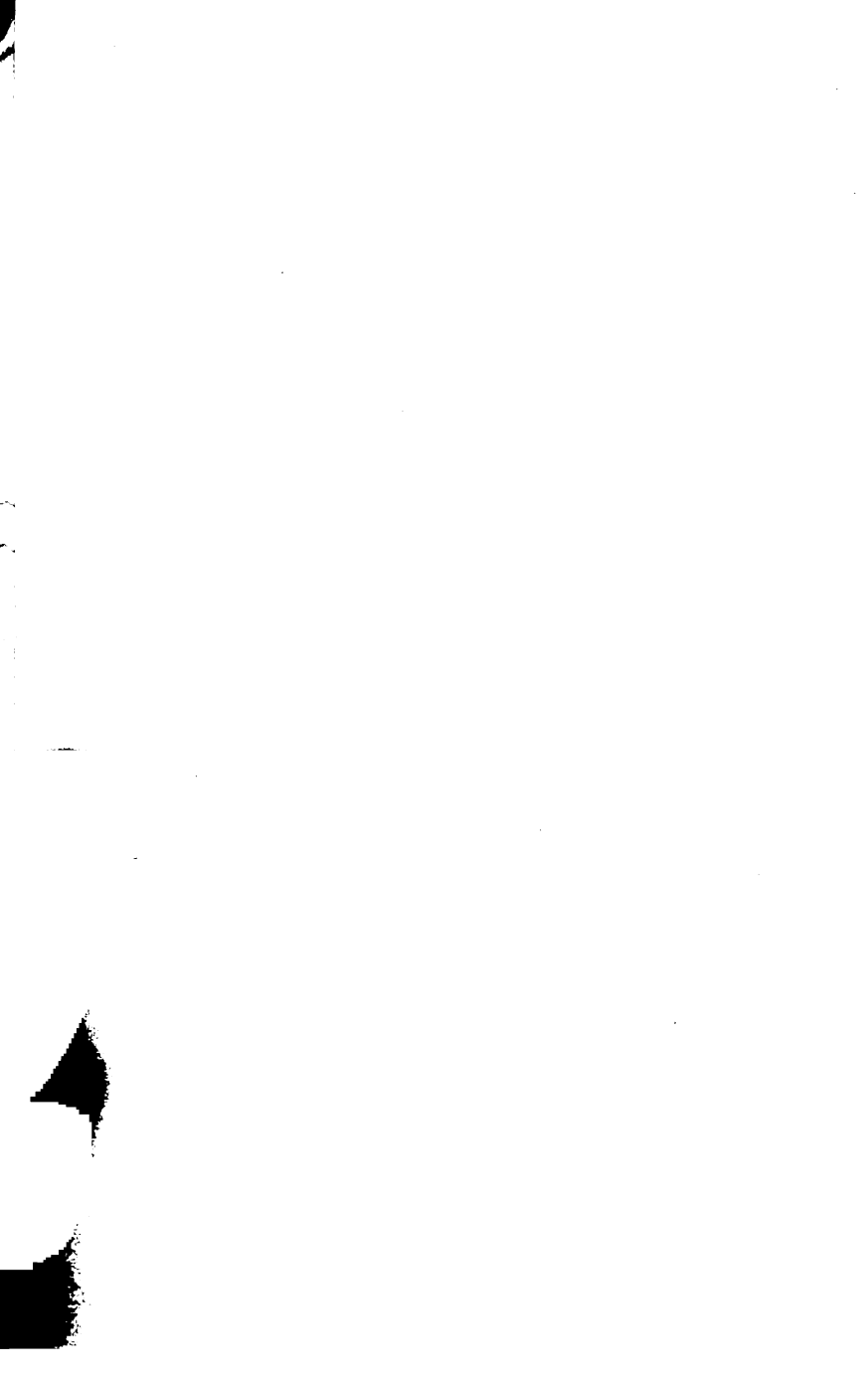
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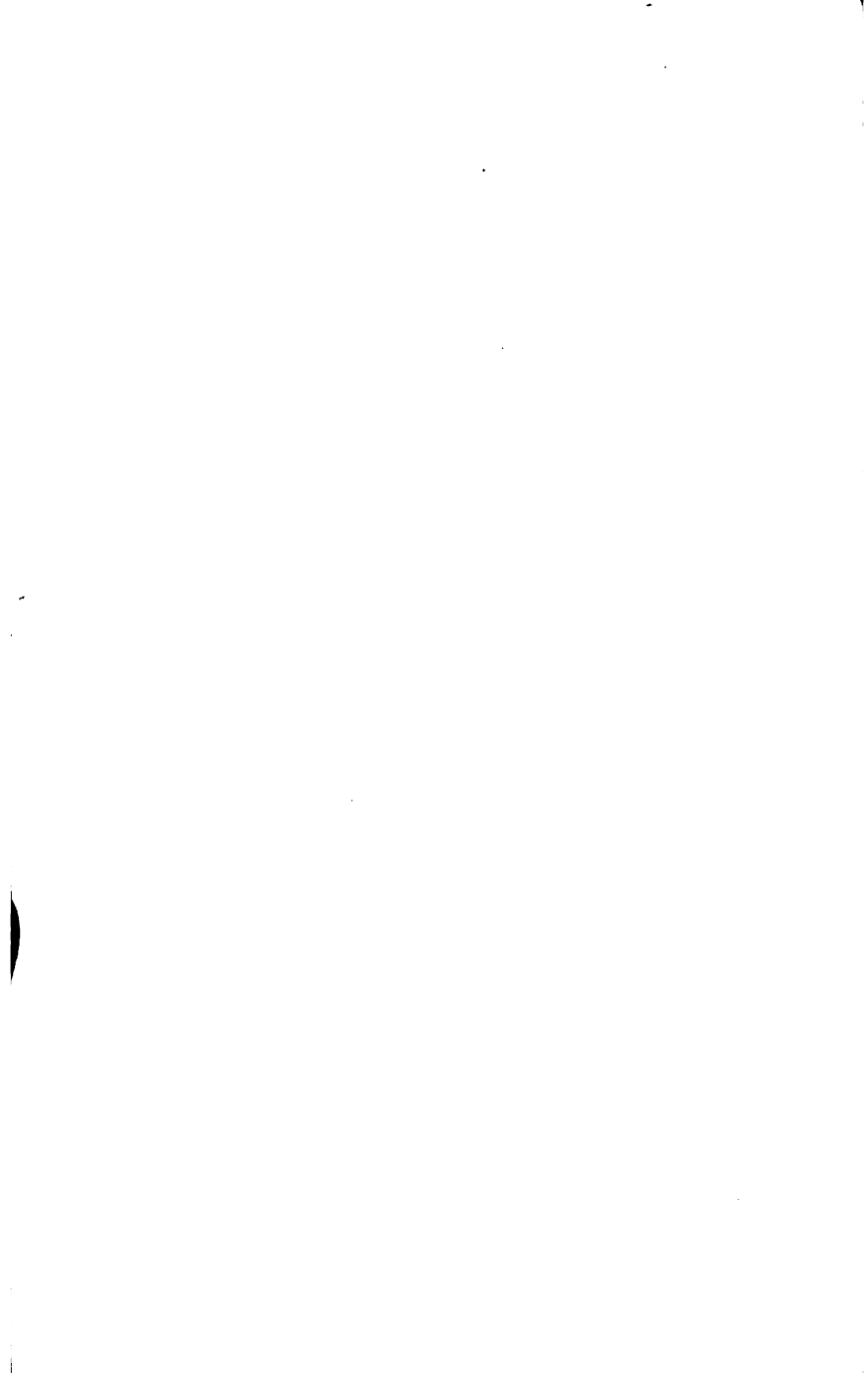
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THE HAPPY PRINCESS
AND OTHER POEMS



THE
HAPPY PRINCESS
AND OTHER POEMS

By
ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE



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Small, Maynard & Company
1907

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Press of
Geo. H. Ellis Co.
Boston, U.S.A.

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The author wishes to thank the Editor of *Scribner's Magazine* for courteous permission to reprint the major portion of "To Fancy in the Later Days"; and also the Editor of *Harper's Magazine* for the same kindness as to "Brahma" and one of the songs from "The Happy Princess."



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THE HAPPY PRINCESS

A Romance



Book I

THE LYRE

In this unquiet, greatly-forging day,
What heart shall have a musing hour to stay
The labor of its striving, or forget
A little while the goal on which is set
The Spirit's passion? Will some listener bring
An ear subdued to harken while I sing
My unpretentious music of low tone,
When all his thought is throbbing with his own
Unuttered songs of intimate hope or pain?
Nay, none will hear; and I shall sing in vain.
Yet as the deathless bards so bright of old
Sang each his dream, weaving the secret gold
Of fancy in the woof, until its fire
Of beauty passeth all that men desire,—
So poets less imperial still shall dare
Lift up their voices on the crowded air;
Knowing that though the melody be frail,
Yet such alone is way that can avail
Ever for bard. And though I be not he
Destined to make immortal minstrelsy,
Yet they who love the poets of dead years
Will give me grace to pour in some few ears
A tale I choose all other tales above
To wreathe about with memory and with love.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

'Tis of a Singer, singing long ago.
Beside what little inland river's flow
His quiet days were spent, or by what roar
Of waves upon what Grecian island shore
His ear was tuned to song, I cannot know ;
For all his life was very long ago.

Yet this much comes to me : — as youth's fair
days
Began to open to the myriad ways
Our life affords (some stained and some bright,
With gloomy dust or with celestial light),
Then to his eyes, that seemed the sweetest road
Which leads to Fancy's gossamer abode ;
Where, musing upon joys to earth unknown,
The dreaming singer walks. For there alone
Is silence deep with meaning. There no noise
Of common feet ; harsh turmoil which destroys
The thin and lovely gauze of poet's dream
Came never there ; but in a limpid stream
His spirit's music exquisitely played,
Till shy-foot fawns and dryads from their shade
Of hazel or of willow oft would peep,
Or naiads rise from dripping bowers of sleep
To listen.

And the singing in his soul
Welled up and flooded o'er the crystal bowl

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Of spirit, and in moulded words came forth.
And in strange quiet corners of the earth
Men, little learned, sang his songs again
Beneath the sunset or the rising Wain
As they turned home. . . .

The years passed over him
Lightly ; and little weeping came to dim
His eyes ; and all of sorrow that he knew
Was rather guessed than deeply felt as true.
Yet many things his poet's heart divined,
And far-off death cast shadows on his mind.
And once, at time when rains began to fall,
He made this song, his heart's "Confessional":—

"I am a singer ; and I set
My steps where dews of dawn are wet,
And wander where dusk shadows steal,
Or where the constellations wheel
Through heaven. And I cannot tell
Why I should love so passing well
Life's winds, and find the common ways
So trivial to my spirit's days.
This only know I, — that my heart
Thirsts for the places lone apart ;
Perfectly glad to do no thing
Save of their secret deeps to sing.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

“Perhaps it is a bitter jest
Of life, — to lead me from the best
Our unreturning days afford ;
And tempting me with dream of Lord
Of Fancy, set a wall between
Mine eyes and all the happy green
Meadows of actual living. Still,
Though this be so, the lyric hill
Is all my home. For there I weave
Songs that I fondly would believe
May last a little, after sun
And moon have chanted orison
Peacefully over my low bed,
Rising and setting where are shed
The flowers that shall wave o’er me
When I shall sleep eternally.

“So on the midnight’s lamplit hour
I pour my spirit’s trembling power,
In hope each wingèd phantasy
Out of the ardent mind may be
Embalmèd in the amber gloom
Of poesy’s immortal tomb.
Not such a grave as where we lay
The mortal embers cold away ;
But a warm shrine, where every beam
Of later sun shall pierce with gleam

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

That shall relume the rainbow fires
Round the bright wings of old desires
And hopes that fluttered warm and fleet
Through meadows where once moved my feet,
Living and dreaming. And again
The sunlight's joy, the moonlight's pain
Shall weave around them, keen or pale,
That magic unsubstantial veil
That men call life. No more they fly
Like wisps of cloud on a summer sky ;
But frozen in their prison walls
No matter how the Springtide calls.
Immortal, yet forever cold ;
Young as at birth, yet ages old.
For life and death shall married be
In this, my immortality."

He sang, and ceased; but the soft music grown
Kept echoing the magic of its tone
On which as on a river flood he rode,
Drifted where'er the singing current flowed.
And now it swept him past his own brief years
To oceans of all mortal hopes and fears;
Till borne returning on the vagrant tide
His thoughts turned to the lyre at his side.

And then, as if awakened by his words,
A murmur stirred across the golden chords,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

And quivering movements sweeping over it
Trembled its frame,— as when o'er waters flit
Passing of winds that ruffle with white feet
The placid surface. And a music sweet
Began to kindle, filled with some strange power,
Like that of poets in their mystic hour,
When a strong other presence seems to take
Command upon the soul. And then it spake,
Singing:—

“ . . . O brother who hast thrilled
My soul to life, that it is filled
With sense of far-off mysteries
And stirrings from the greater seas;—
When we are past the setting sun
Days shall seem precious, every one;—
How shall we look back wholly glad
If now we linger, rapt and sad ?

“ Brother, I have been with thee when
We sang the pageantry of men
And battle and resounding deeds,—
Of love and all its loving needs,—
Of toil and mighty weariness :—
Each joy and struggle that could bless
The earth of men, the sea of ships,
Has been in song upon our lips.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

“And yet, O brother-heart, meseems,
Beyond the covert of our dreams,
As if from life there might be wrung
Music more sweet than we have sung;
Lovelier and more keenly dear
Than that which fills the spirit's ear;
With tones more deep, that well might be
The hoarded joy of memory.

“Why may we not go forth, my brother,
Unto the great unlighted sky;
Thou and I, and no heart other,
To feel together before we die
That whole whose glimpses, singing, we
Have found so precious of desire.
Yea, this one thing I ask of thee,
Who am thy brother and thy lyre.”

And as it ceased, the Singer minded him
How all his days had passed beneath the dim
And haunted shades of fancy; — that delight
Of struggle, or attainment, or black night
Of failure were as things a dream has shown; —
Felt, understood, but never quite his own.
Long had he loved such maids as Helen fair,
And Eastern princesses with tawny hair,
And walked with ladies from a faery land:

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

But when yet had he touched a living hand?
Then thinking upon this, he stirred the strings
With loving touch, and to their whisperings
Cried: —

“ To the fields we will go forth
And prove the weakness or the worth
Of songs that we so long have sung, —
If they will comfort us among
Cold cities and unfavoring fields,
And take what cheer the singing yields.
Brother, together we shall rove,
And learn perchance of joy and love
Some little that we had not guessed, —
We who have leaned on Helen's breast
In fancy. Yea, the world is wide,
And earth is flushing with Springtide !” ...

Book II

THE EMERALD GATE

There was a city of high golden walls ;
Men said its gates were chiselled emeralds ;
But some believed the green fires of the dawn
Rose from the slopes these towers were builded
on,
And, lit afresh each morn and evening, came
To guard the city with a door of flame
Like Spring's pale splendors. And the night-
winds set
Their stars upon its walls. Its feet were wet
With quiet ripples of a sea whose marge
No man had touched. Within, a palace large
And of high splendor worthily was house
Unto a king upon whose silent brows
Was set the double crown of East and West. . . .

Thither the Singer came upon his quest
Of hours more beautiful and life more warm ;
And with his lyre at rest upon his arm,
Paused at the threshold of the Emerald Gate ;
And then, with seeking and with youth elate,
Entered ; and, passing in the busy crowd,
Moving through courts where fountain-jets were
loud

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

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THE HAPPY PRINCESS

In rounded basins of the cool-veined jade,
Went onward to the hall whose porches made
A shining marble-pillared colonnade.
Looking through spaces of the columns tall,
The outside world seemed lightened of its pall
Of dinginess; and field and sun and tree
Were folded in some brilliant witchery,
That made the heart glad with the little bay,
And cleared the words the hill-winds tried to
say,
And gave each glimpse of sea or winding road
Personal consonance with man's abode.

He entered; and because his dress was trim,
And youth's and music's brightness played o'er
him,
And since his singing was so passing sweet,
They gave to him a lofty golden seat
At the high table of the silent king,
Who gazed at him with pleasant wondering.

On either hand at that great table sate
Stern ministers, and ladies of high state,
And nobles of the blood. And there was one
About whose head the glow of summer sun
Seemed visible, — the princess. And a flame
Of the earth's glory flickered where she came.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

I know not in what subtle words to sing
That to the sight of others I may bring
This splendid princess with bright golden hair.
No man who saw might call this princess fair
If with that word he had named other maid
Of earth. Such beauty maketh each afraid
Lest looking he may shatter it like gleam
Of rainbow bubble on some dancing stream.
Each perfume drifted from the dreaming South
Seemed mingled in the smiling of her mouth.
Each beam of fire a star sheds as it dies
Was met to make the glory of her eyes.
And old men, watching where her figure moved,
Wept, hearing long-dead voices they had loved.

And the young Singer, seeing such a form
As hers, clothed round with rose-mists soft and
warm
Like those that dawn over the meadow weaves,
Was stricken silent ; — as one who long believes
In powers divine, yet when a miracle
At last appears, doubts what his senses tell.
Each song of beauties dead so long ago,
Each tale of dear loves underneath the snow,
Each melody that breathes of garden-closes,
Full of the trembling passion of the roses,—
All these, and every hoarded hope were crying ;

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

And each remembered lay of love undying
Dizzily came, like clouds at twilight flying,
Upgathered in a single blinding gleam,
Showering with tenderness from every dream
That oft had wavered in his random singing.
And dumb he stood, knowing that life was
bringing
At last a form that on real earth did move
To deck with all the splendors of his love.

He looked not ever at the pageantry ;
He heard no voice of all the minstrelsy.
For sight and sense in dreaming trance were
bound,
And wingèd thought moved its tumultuous
round
Of sudden love and exaltation's flame ;
As if, in some far garden, round one name
Spirits did hover, and continually
Make adoration of strange melody.

And many a day in shadow of those halls
He tarried,— like the Knight a spell enthalls
When, wandering lone the meads at evening,
He hears the calling faery-voices sing.
For voices of the air or of the earth

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Were round him. Some, it seemed, he knew
from birth,
So grateful and familiar-toned were they ;
But others, drifting from the far-away
Bourne of the winds, fluttered before the eyes
Of fancy with the promise of surprise
Most wonderful and sweet. Each day they grew
Until it seemed they surely must beat through
The thinness of their veil and burst like flame. —
And on one day of days, at last they came.

He sat within the wildwood, and the air
That waved the princess's bright loosened hair
Was like a living breath ; and she, alive
With mystery of beauty that would drive
Now and again his blood in such a sway
That he must turn his wondering eyes away
To hide their look. At length, too much afraid
For silences, he took his harp and played : —

“My love, the ripple dances
Along the lonely sand.
And on the water glances
Moonlight from faeryland.

“You seem the high-born maiden
And I the lover bold

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Who from his heart love-laden
Sang madrigals of old.

“ You are the prisoned princess
Whose love-enraptured lips
Wrought songs that made great princes
Sail o’er the sea in ships.

“ You are the queen of revels
And I the lover poor.
We through the sunrise levels
Fled far across the moor.

“ My love, the ripple dances
Along the quiet sand.
And where yon moonlight glances,
There is our faeryland.”

When he had done, the princess said no word,
But looked at him as one who just had heard
Some pleasant song might look at any bard
And smile the sweetness of her soft reward.
Even such sweetness was too magical
With beauty not to bring in swift recall
The whole stored longing of a hundred Springs ;
And stir within his blood rememberings,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Vague and elusive, as if he somewhere
Had died of old for love of the bright hair
Of a forgotten woman, whom new birth
Made real once more upon the Springtide earth.
And forces deeper than his single mind
Swept him like petals on the great South Wind,
Till his whole being whirled in a peopled mist.
And suddenly upon the brow he kissed
The princess,— folding to his reckless breast
Her young frail bosom; — clasped her hands and
pressed
Them to him ; — and sank back, benumbed and
blind,
Trembling like petals on the great South Wind. . . .

And such a silence on the woodland grew
As seemed to make a barrier round these two,
Shutting them in with viewless walls of glass
From every sound that through the world did
pass ;
From every thought or dream of what might
move
Beyond the stillness of the twilight grove.

Then o'er his head he heard the stirring air,
And felt the touch of fingers on his hair, —
A gentle touch that seemed to come and pass

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Like his own breath trembling the tender grass.
And in his ear a whisper: —

“Dear one, let
This hour go by forever, and forget.
Forget me if you will; yea, that were meet
Since I have made this pathway for your feet.
Yet I were loath to have you quite lose thought
Of me and of the sweetness you have brought.
I too have loved,— not with such love as smites
Its fire upon the soul,— but with soft lights
Of tenderness. . . . Dear one, no more can be
Save only this ever for you and me.”

And he looked slowly in her eyes and said:—
“The light of my whole life is round your head,
So that with you my living hours must bide
Or else go wandering into eventide.
You only give the meaning to this dream
Of earthly days, where pallid mist-lights stream
In chaos save for you. Upon your form
The dizzying beams find goal; and lighted,
warm,
I see you in the whirlwind of their fire,—
You who give house to the soul’s lost desire,—
You, the one lamp under whose glow unfold
Life’s hidden pages writ in secret gold.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

And if you go, dusk comes to blur the line
That had been portent of your life and mine."

Pitifully looking in his eyes, she laid
Her hand on his, and quivering answer made: —
"What am I, that unguessing I have stirred
This in your heart? Never remorseful word
Shall make forgiveness for me. Oh, forget
All you have dreamed. For me, my path is set
Toward other life; this is not mine to take.
Go; for it is a dream whence you will wake;
Go, since the end has come; no more can be
Save only this ever for you and me."

Whereon he answered, low and tremblingly: —
"What other meaning has there been in Spring
That for so many years made whispering
On my deaf ears? And now the meaning goes;
And in one hour blossoms and dies the rose."

And then it ended. With one strained embrace
He turned and fled out from the haunted place;
And through the woodland's leafy flickering
shade
Sped on, as though his heart were too afraid
Of what dear wraiths were following on behind
To dare to turn again. The evening wind

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Began to rise, and breathed its tender call
Over the forest, faintly musical.
The birds commenced to sing their twilight song ;
And in the fields the shadows laid their long
Quivering fingers on the folding bloom
Of lilies lulled to slumber by the boom
Of heavy-winged beetles as they passed;
And fireflies rose flickering from the grass.
And the last redness of the western gleam
Faded on the cool bosom of each stream.

Book III

THE ROOFS OF THE CITY

Know you that ancient battlemented town,
With roofs a-crumble and walls turning brown
Beneath their ivy, on whose northern gate
The Lion with the Truncheon ramps in state
Upon his shield of dim heraldic gold ?
A mouldering town, grown now so very old
That it forgets its youth; and like a crone
Over her hearth-fire, mumbles dreams alone ;—
Not fair dreams, but the petty questionings
That burr and babble as the kettle sings.

To such a place the Singer drifted on
Through field and city, aimless and alone ;
And in the end, sore weary, found him house
In an old slanting attic whose dark brows
Frowned o'er the street. Yet when the day did
wane

With level sun, and through each leaded pane
Poured yellow light, then were he loath to change
His window on the roofs for the whole range
Of royal gardens. Over gables high
Sharp black against the fading western sky,—
Over old chimneys curling forth a haze

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Of thin blue smoke,—he watched the ending
days

Sink to their low red line of deepening glow,
And in his heart would ever come and go
The changing pictures of those days that set
Visions before the eyes too often wet.
And in the twilight he would live anew
The love that silent in his spirit grew;
Feeding remembrance with each hour and
place,—

Each look that once had played upon her face,
Each glory that had lighted in her eyes.
And sometimes suddenly a flood would rise
Within his heart to bear him, pale and lost,
To such a sea of longing that no cost
Of life or death seemed anything to pay
For one word spoken in the old dear way.

But as the days wore on, and moon by moon
The summer passed, the immemorial boon
Of peace stole on him.— Not forgetfulness;
For more than all life held, he still would press
Unto his inmost heart that memory
Sweeter than ever aught again might be.
Let come thereafter whatsoever may,
Youth still is right in clinging to the day
Of its first love: by some dim sense it knows

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

That when this passes, then the dawn-light goes.
And though the noon be fair, who can put by
His tenderness for that first flushing sky ?

Songs came, but not so freshly as of old.
Sometimes, when loneliness crept on like cold,
He would go forth into the market-place
Amid the people; but no lifted face
Gave him that joy which he had known when
tears
Had touched his listeners' eyes in former years.
None here had tears for others' songs to spare ;
And all his music froze in the blank air.
Therefore he ceased to sing, save to his own
Brave heart at twilight where he sat alone.

One eve in his lone attic far apart
He sang this song unto his dreaming heart:—

“The Spring and the Rose have passed ;
And you, my love, have flown,
Like a breath too sweet to last
From the buds of the hawthorn blown.

“O love, in the clear Spring weather
Our hearts were like fair white flowers;
And the joy of our days together
Comes back through the silent hours.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

“But now that the love is over,
With all that the days might bring,
What joy to the lonely lover
In Spring and the Rose of Spring?”

And as he ceased, he heard a little noise
Outside his window, and a shrinking voice
Said, “Sir, may I not listen?”

Next his own,
There hung a casement-balcony, alone
In all the street for being decked with bloom
Of flowers ever. Now, from his dim room,
He peered into the dusk, and saw a face
Pale and half-frighted, looking o’er the space
Between them. Such a ruddiness of mouth
Might have been brought to blossom in the South;
But the shy eyes, the whiteness of her brow,
Were such as no earth-magic could endow
Save windy northern lands, where Beauty broods
And flees from Madness through waste solitudes.
A woman’s mouth; and eyes that scarcely knew
The wisdom of a woman, save that through
Their depths that light would swiftly come and go
Whereby the soul knows more than it can know.

“Gladly shall you be listener to my lays,”
The Singer said.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

“Now for so many days,”
She answered, “have I heard you, and could bear
No longer like an eavesdropper to wear
A mask of silence. For your singing fills
My heart like summer light between the hills.
It is so strange, — so wonderful a thing; —
How have you learned such melodies to sing?”

And he made kindly answer: —

“Why, meseems,
We weave our singing as a link of dreams
To pierce beyond our narrow loneliness
When mists of night and silence seem to press
Blindly on the heart. And then our song
Is like a chain which stretches far along
Into the outer planetary air,
Touching perhaps some star, none knoweth
where.
I do not think that such things can be taught;
I know that never hoarded gold has bought,
With all the splendid pomp of Eastern seas,
The secret touchstone of these mysteries.”

And she said slowly:—“I have known too well
That loneliness; but I could never tell,
Though I had wished it, unto any one
How much the voiceless spirit, being alone,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Yearns for its chain to the peopled outer spaces
Of lighted sky and the great open places.
I felt it ever, though I had no words
Until the day I heard your chanted chords.
I felt it ;— yea, not even you can know,—
You in whom songs and strength of singing
glow ;—
You know not how our buried longings sing
Although our voices chant not anything.” . . .

And then, giving no pause for his reply,
She hurried on, eager, but tremblingly :—

“ There is so much to tell to you: one hour
Cannot contain it : yet the very power
Of what it is forces it into one,
Which must be rising-song and requiem.
Once only may I see you,— I who heard
Of your sweet singing every breathèd word,—
That I may tell you what your songs have made
For one who moves in the world’s silent shade ;—
What worship has been poured, what secret dew
Of love has fallen, though you never knew :
How all my soul has flowed in music sweet
And flung itself in passion at your feet.
—For ah, I know your heart so passing well!
Since I have hoarded every note that fell

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Fresh from your lips:—such heart I did not
know

Amid earth's darkened loneliness could grow.

—I tell it you, who are so far above

The dim entanglements of struggling love

That I may speak my soul's most secret word

Almost as if to him, the Blessed Lord.

You are the light each rising morn would seek,

And finds not in the world; so that, grown weak

And weary with its search, it sinks to rest

Beyond the mountains folding in the West.

You are the secret beauty too divine

Often amid earth's cruelties to shine ;

And I give thanks as to a shining god

Made manifest upon the darkling road—

A god whom I might love as it is given

To some few souls to love the lights of Heaven.

And in that love has melted all my pride,

And to have told you this, I would have died.”

And then she fled; and the night lay still and
wide.

Not any day thereafter did he see

That slender form upon her balcony.

But often when the lyric passion stirred

His singing lips, he somehow knew she heard.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

And greatly did he marvel at it all,
Thinking:—

“I know my song is musical
With sweetness that might well enthrall the sense
With its unguessed and shadowy eloquence;
But 'tis most strange her fancy should have set
My form upon a height which never yet
An actual man has won. Too well I know
That I am not a god, but here below
Struggle in dust of mortal frailties
And rarely look upon the sacred seas
Of fair Apollo.—What a mystery
Is love, that it can build its history
Upon an unreal dream, and thence uprear
Its shining turrets, till the sunlight clear
Gilds the high bastions with a crown of fire.
Strange love; strange weaving of a blind desire
In spider-web around a branch of pine
Until, transformed, the dingy bosses shine
With rainbow colors.”

As a tempest stroke
Suddenly blasts a hollow shell of oak
That long has secretly been mouldering through
Though strong to outward look,—so smote a new
Revealing light upon the Singer's mind.
And for a dizzy moment in the wind

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Swayed the fair tree that was his love of yore,
And then fell, gaping to its hollow core.

“I too,— yea, I too, reared me such a dream!
Around a woman’s form I wove the gleam
Borrowed from sunrise, and the night’s proclaim
I mingled with the music of her name.
I saw her eyes; and in the empty blue
I made each longing of the heart come true.
And I have loved not her, but that bright shade
Which out of dreams my tenderness has made!”

And half aghast, he saw the end draw nigh
To the illusion of his ecstasy.
Yet half in gladness ;— if the loving yoke
Were bubble magic, better it were broke
Swiftly than if it still should lead him on,
To fail at last when he was old and lone. . . .

Pondering these things, weary of the town,
He rose one morn; and out across the down
Once more he turned his footsteps, wayfaring
With the old feeling that new paths would bring
Perhaps some revelation. Many days
He held his course through unfrequented ways ;
With wondering thoughts for what his days had
taught ;

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

With pity for the love that he had brought
All unsuspecting to a lonely maid;
And on and on along the world he strayed.
The passing of swift time he did not heed.
Winter was gone; and then the greening mead
Ripened through Summer to September's old
Familiar warmth of hazy western gold. . . .
When late in Autumn, on the sunny hills
Of afternoon, a single cricket shrills
More loud for being alone; when blue jays call
Their hoarse complaint; when whirling red leaves
 fall,
And the busy squirrel among his granaries
Chatters at the intruder from the trees;
When swallows fly above the fringed wood,—
Black sailing specks against the violet flood
Of light to westward,—till the rising mist
Deepens its shadows into amethyst
And golden flakes, and one long cloud goes by
Like a fiery feather on the dimming sky:—
Then would he muse and ponder; and the days
Stole by him silently; and still the ways
Of life seemed opening to no final goal
Where, at the end, might rest the seeking soul.

Book IV

THE ELDEST PRINCESS

Changed many ways from what he was of old,
The Singer moved with memories manifold.
Sadness and pity had come over him,
And knowledge how the eager soul will dim
Its own clear sight with dreams it loves to cast
Upon reality. But Winter's blast
Will tear away the wrappings and leave bare
The cherished blossom for the winter air
To wither up. This knew he ;— much to know
For one whose fancy ever was aglow
With glories more than earthly. But he trod
Not the less lightly that the actual sod
Of earth no more was haunted in his eyes
With cloudy magic of uncertain skies.
Rather, some deeper meaning came to lay
Its touch upon the things of every day,—
Some warm significance that bound in one
Each heart that beat and toiled beneath the sun.
And this hour first since when his life began,
He looked forth clearly on the face of man.

Wandering amid the silence of the hills,
In the large peace which meditation fills

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

With mused interpretation of things seen,
With scrutiny of each too-fluttering dream,
He found within his heart new tenderness
For every living thing. Small need to dress
With light unreal the happenings of earth,
Since naught of common nor of trivial worth
Could he discover in the world that shed
Its sadness and its beauty round his head.

One day he came unto a mountain-town,
With hanging castles looking steeply down
Upon the meadow-valleys. And some whim
Led him to climb up through the forests dim
And rocks and streams to where the city sate
With tall, dark towers and massive armored
gate.

And in the palace of the ruling lord
Right merrily unto the festal board
Was he with all rejoicing featly led ;
For fame of his sweet song had gone ahead
And wrought his welcome. And the lord did
pray
He tarry with them for a year and day.

In that great house were many noble forms
Of carven mail and blazoning of arms
And reliques of the glory of past years.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Amid these trophies moved, as later peers,
Full many a lord and lady of degree ;
And much of pageant and sweet minstrelsy.
But fairer than all other things was set
Upon the palace, like a coronet
Of pearls, the princesses, — a rounded seven.
And in the music of a song's sweet steven
Their voices were the clearest ; and no thing
Moved in those halls save for their pleasuring.

And of the seven starry princesses,
The ways and manners of their days were
these : —

The first smiled ever, and with glad surprise
Watched life unfold before her eager eyes.
The second was most sad ; for she had seen
Life's wastes, and now forgot the meads between.
The third moved calmly through her life's estate,

Never quite sad and never quite elate,
With face that men called often chill and old.
The fourth found happiness in splendid gold
Of sweeping gowns that on the carpet rolled
Their trains like peacocks proudly wandering.
The fifth, men said, was sure a wildwood thing
Strayed into human form. For she would start,
And with wild eyes turn shivering from her part

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

In ordered custom. And a dreamful stir
As of the forest quivered over her.
The sixth was plighted to a noble lord ;
And her whole life was ruled by sweet accord
With every breath of his. At dusk or dawn
Her love wove for him ceaseless orison.
The seventh, who was eldest, stood apart,
And no man knew the chambers of her heart,
Save only that she moved serene and proud,
Leading each revel of the palace-crowd ;
That never was her voice cast down or sad.
And none, from lord to little serving-lad,
A single quality of her might tell
Save calm and lovely and inscrutable.

Amid them all the Singer silent moved.
The youngest looked upon his face and loved ;
But he observed it not, so rapt was he
In some old wandering of phantasy.
But to the eldest three his steps oft led ;
And though the Wildwood Princess sometimes
fled,
And though the Plighted Princess oft would
stray
In other thoughts, yet came he every day
Unto their balcony, there to rehearse
Some ancient melody, or hold converse

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

With the eldest princess in high pleasant wise,
While ever smiles played in her cloudless eyes.

The eldest princess was a curious deep,—
Mist-girt, trailing as if from dreamful sleep
Some unimaginable lovely thing.
I know not if in flood-tide of her Spring
She could have been more beautiful than now
When Summer ripeness of each leaf and bough
Trembled toward Autumn. For a score and ten
Of years had she been loved by countless men;
Yea, even in her cradle did men know
In that far time, full thirty years ago,
That she was destined to be lovable.
And though all marvelled, yet no lips could tell
Why still aloof her pleasant life she led
And moved sweet, self-enfolded, and unwed.

Oft-times the Singer lovingly would note
The soft firm whiteness of her curving throat,—
The drooping of her lashes that would veil
Her thoughts from him,—the hands so firm and
pale,—
And the dark beauty of her bended head,
For all its strength a little wearied —
Perhaps with dumb recurrence of the days
And guarded pacing of the clear high ways;

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Or else, perhaps, feeling the weight of cold
Autumn, and knowing she must soon be old.
Oft-times in the rose-garden they would walk,
Some two or three together; but her talk
Seemed to him ever as a mist between
Him and the deeps his eyes would fain have seen.

It chanced that on a certain festal night
The lords and ladies, in glad raiment dight,
Were gathered gayly in the banquet hall
To listen to the singing musical
Of the seven princesses. Sweetly they sang
Together, that the archèd vaulting rang
With melody; and these were the few words
Sung to the singer's softly fingered chords:—

“The Rose shall go away,
And the Nightingale be still,
And a silence shroud the hill
For the loves of yesterday.

“But if his rapturous singing
Has trembled in her ears,
Shall not his smiles and tears
Still unto her go winging?

“And if her sweets have been
His solace and his pain,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Shall not her bloom again
Shine through his covert green ?

“For the Rose shall go away
And the Nightingale shall cease.
But death gives not release
To the love of yesterday.”

And all the lords and ladies smiled and
said :—

“’Tis sweet, ’tis exquisite. That rose of red
The youngest princess wears is well designed
To grace her hair. And where may any find
Form lovelier than that of the Plighted Maid ?
The Wildwood Princess seemeth half afraid
Of her own beauty.” Speaking thus, they went
Out of the hall with courteous argument
And laughing voices. And their fading tone
Left in the hall the Singer quite alone.

The palace was girt round with balconies,
Broad, hanging high above the garden trees
Where breathed low voices in each night of June.
But now in autumn dusk, the rounded moon
Rose over them like Silence’s own form
With close-drawn robe and pallid bended arm
Moving austere along her rightful halls. . . .
Here came the Singer, with such thought as calls



THE HAPPY PRINCESS

For hush of silence and the night's wide space
To understand its own transfigured face.

And as he came, he saw against the sky
The eldest princess leaning wearily,
Close by a pillar. He drew near, and stood
Beside her, silent, save what beat his blood
Made in him. But she still was motionless,
And the night wind stirred gently in her dress,
And neither spake

Till from the golden strings
The Singer touched a sound of murmurings
Wonderfully sad and distant; drifting on
Into the low-breathed music of his song : —

“The Princesses were singing
Before the belted Lords,—
Heads high, with sweet lips ringing,
And the Minstrel gave the words.

“But the Eldest Princess only
Lingered upon each note,
And a beauty strange and lonely
Was on her soft white throat,—

“A beauty that half was sadness,
Or full-bloomed Summer's pain,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

More deep than the Spring's swift gladness,
And touched with the Autumn rain.

“And I think that the Princess trembled
With the dream of a far desire;
And the passion in pride dissembled
Glowed up to her lips like fire,

“As she sang the song of the Minstrel
Who gave her the tender words,
As he stood in the hidden shadow
Behind the smiling Lords.

“For he was a boy, the Minstrel,
And his ways lay far apart.
But all men's ways were his ways,
For he had the poet's heart.

“And he saw the Eldest Princess
Like a flower on the heights above.
And he trembled below in silence
For her loneliness of love.

“But the Princesses still were singing
Before the smiling Lords,
Heads high, with sweet lips ringing,
And the Minstrel gave the words.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

“’Tis an old and well-worn story,
But I think that it once came true.
For I know the dream of the Princess,
And the Princess who dreamed was you.”

He ceased, half trembling. Not a faintest stir
Showed him that life was still alive in her.
Motionless stood she, as she had not heard
Of his strange singing any single word.
And he was dumb. At last did she upraise
Her eyes, and looked at him with long slow gaze
Brimming with tears.

Such light was in her face
As chosen men see in a holy place
When gods come down to lead them to some goal
Beyond all vision of the mortal soul. . . .

“This you have told to me,—how could you
know?
No one has understood. So long ago
I shut up in a casket all desires
For love and joy,—all hope of starry fires
I once believed in. And you come again
To stir the old-time ecstasy of pain
And faith in dreams I thought were surely
dead.”

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

She paused a little, and then softly said,—

“Yea, heart’s dear friend, you only understood

What none, perhaps, save one or two hearts
could,—

The emptiness where hope of love is gone,
And life in barren channels must flow on.”

And then the beauty of her leant arm,
Her curving throat so palpitant and warm,
Filled him with mastery of the final flame
For which earth knows no holy enough name;
So that he whispered,—“Ah, can it not be?” . . .
And then at once he knew that foolishly
He had spoken.

But most tenderly she said :—

“Nay, crowns of laurel must be on your head
In bloom of manhood when my hair is white
And from mine eyes has faded any light
That now may linger. You would love me still;
But could I bear to see youth’s pulses fill
Your being when my love-fire should be cold,
And know your tenderness to one grown old?”

And he made whispered answer : “My desire
Is lit, I think, from an unfading fire.
The long days cannot dim it, nor the nights

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Outshine its clearness with their myriad lights
Yonder in heaven.—Yet I will not press
On you one breath of its great tenderness
If thus it stirs your pitiful sweet tears.”

And she cried low, “The years, the weary
years !

Ah, I am mad to-night, that I can dream
Even a moment.—Nay, there flows a stream
Impassable between us ; for my fate
Calls me to life of rigid lofty state ;
And you must wander over the free world,
And in no harbor may your sail be furled
Save the dream-haven where all beauties come,
Desires and visions, turning gladly home.
You shall go from me ; for we two have seen
Deeper in life than the elusive sheen
Of what each heart would dream,— yea, and
would give
All its own hope if but the dream might live.” . . .

He would have spoken ; but all eloquence
Faded before her ; and a sudden sense
Of deeper meaning came as silencer
Of the wild words he would have cried to her ; —
A sense of wisdom in those sad, calm eyes
That dared look clearly on fixed destinies.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Between them passed no single word of love.
Only she said, with lips that trembled of
Their passionate calmness,— “Yea, I too have
seen

What marvel might have dawned if I had been
Born later, or your destiny's stern way
Had brought you to me on some yesterday
When I was young.” . . .

And hand in hand they stood
Silent with thoughts. And in the shadowy wood
The moon sank ; and the autumn darkness
wove
Its lonely veil about them and their love.

Book V

THE SINGER

"No song of loving have I ever sung you ;
Yet in my heart yours is the holiest shrine.
O memory-haunting forms, not one among you
Is half so pale as this, or so divine
With stern revealing light that in few hearts
might shine.

"God knows what fire had been in you as
lover,
Had you but lessened from your high control
Of love and life. The close hours that discover
With tenderness's cruel light the soul
And all its weakness, found you unswerving from
the Goal."

So singing, down the gray slopes of the hill
The Singer went, as dawn began to fill
With rosy wine the valley's brimming cup.
And often turning that he might look up
One last time more to the sunrise-gilded towers,
Winged round with light from memory's secret
hours,
Went onward. And with swinging firmness
strode
Along the fair white windings of the road.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Long was the road, that skirting field or foam
Turned toward the fastness of his ancient home.
And as it went, it passed the drowsy town
With mouldering spires and gateways turning
 brown;
And passed the City of the Emerald Gate;
And came at last, when twilight low and late
Burned on the fields, unto the silent place
Whence once, with sunrise glowing on his face,
The Singer came forth many a year ago. . . .

As he drew near to it, there seemed to grow
A stir and quiver in the golden strings
That had been comrade of his wanderings ;
And just as one time long ago they spoke,
So now the prisoned spirit thrilled and broke
Its silence, as if wakened by presage
That this was end of its long pilgrimage.

“ Brother heart, the day is done,
And the ending of the sun
Over meadow, over foam,
Bringeth us, so long a-roam,
To the quiet gates of home.
In our many pilgrim days,
In our strange and tortuous ways,
In our sorrow and delight,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

In our noonday and our night,—
Tell me, now that all is done,
If thy seeking heart has won
From the things of little worth
That for which we wandered forth?"

Hearing, the Singer bowed awhile his head
As musing, or a little wearied.
And then, with eyes glowing with some deep
fire,
Made answer to his brother and his lyre :—

"Brother, it is no small thing
To have sung the songs we sing.
Better still is it to see
All was seen by thee and me.
Best of all when hearts a-roam
Turn in last fulfilment home.

"For me, I deem that life has paid
Its debt. Upon one brow is laid
Such light as would alone have given
Glimpse of the lamps that burn in heaven.
O happy princess, yours the gleam
And yours the unimagined dream
Which makes the hours both sad and deep
With richer undertones that sleep

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Beneath the music of our days
And turn to gold the trodden ways.
Nay, more than dream; for the soul sees
These dreams are actualities,
Rooted in no desire apart,
But sprung from Beauty's truest heart.
And over all of these you stand,
Holding aloft with firm pale hand
The chariot reins of life's swift car.
Beneath the sun or midnight star
You guide it with that strong control
Which is the triumph of the soul. . . .

"O princess, had I come to you
When life and love were still so new
As to be things in wonder veiled,
Who knows but that I might have failed
To see the immortal brightness set
Upon your lips and lashes wet.
Through paths of longing have I come,
Through lands where agony is dumb.
But now in peace and calm I go.
I have beheld the light, and know.

"I do not think that any Fall
Hereafter shall work miracle
Of sunset when the trees are bare,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Or fire the chill and living air,
But I shall feel, across all lands,
The outstretched yearning of your hands.
No autumn dawning-hour can shake
Its plumes of gold but shall awake
Tenderness in me ; and your name
Shall pass upon the wingèd flame.

“ And for you too has it not been
Enough that, living, each has seen
Another heart unveiled and clear,
And felt another soul draw near
Until they mingled in one breath
And touch of wings ? Which never death
Nor any change can take away ;
Nor harshly wearing later day
Dispel the love ; nay, rather it
Shall like an aureole flame transmit
Soft brightness wheresoe'er we move
And fill the world with light of love.

“ But when all lights are overblown
And darkness hovers on alone,
Then shall the vanished spirit know
These things ? Shall sun or Springtide's glow
Revive the life of long ago,
Through former dreams that still shall last

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

When into dark the dreamer passed ?
Some unbelief that we can die,
Some sense of immortality,
Not sure, but lingering piteously,
Brings strength to shape the hope ; but all
Our hopes and singing musical
Give no long comfort, though we cling
To faith, and rouse our hearts to sing
As if from heaven the soul might view
On earth its visions live anew ;
Forgetting that it all is vain,
And death gives nothing back again.

“ Yet song is magical ; it brings
Some unguessed glory on its wings, —
Some clinging memory that shall last
When into dark the bard has passed.
Therefore methinks I still shall feel
The old reviving rapture steal
Below to comfort me, when eyes
Of youths shall open with surprise
And revelation, as the fire
Of sudden wonder and desire
In my dear-bought, sweet, quivering words
Shall strike their beings' hidden chords.
If in a fountain-plashing room
Weavers round some Arabian loom

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Unto each other shall repeat
My music, very low and sweet,
And in their colors' rich design.
Unknowing weave these dreams of mine,
Then certainly I shall awake
And bless the far world for their sake.
When maidens on a summer night
Whisper, with softly-breathed delight,
My songs in their beloved's ear,
Surely I shall not fail to hear,
However far my spirit bides,
However mingled in strange tides
Of other life or other death.
And mine shall be their trembling breath
By right of fancy which has wove
The kindling image of their love.

“And from some chamber of the West
Where I shall take my final rest,
I shall look back on life, inspired
With light on puzzles that once tired
My thought in labyrinths immense.—
The mysteries of soul and sense ;
And what is good, and what is base ;
What hallows one beloved face ;
Why hopeless chasms must still be trod
By him who greatly dreams of God ;

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Why tears alone can wake the mute
Music that sleeps within the lute : —
All these I think that I shall know,
And many a tale of long ago. —
All things that living I have sung
With reverencing though feeble tongue
Shall there be stripped of cloaking form,
And actual, palpitant and warm,
As disembodied essences
In every dawn flood to mine eyes.
Living, I loved them for no sake
Save Beauty's ; dying, then I find
Of all the goods I leave behind,
The only treasure I can take.

“But now what care I if I know,
When I shall sleep, wrapped cold, below,
How my praises shall be sung,
How my altars may be hung,
With what pomp of nights and days
Men may give my singing praise.
But this thing I find most sweet : —
To have trod with living feet
Through the uplands, through the green, —
Living, that mine eyes have seen
What strength the mortal heart can hold,
On which such tenderness doth fold

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

As still may last when moon and sun
And stars have chanted orison
Peacefully over my low bed,
Rising and setting where are shed
The flowers that shall wave o'er me
When I shall sleep eternally."

And the old glory came upon his face
With such a softness as to half erase
The marks of time and each too-longing pang.
And lifting up his golden harp he sang :—

"Thou strangely quivering, lifeless thing,
How cruel to waken thee to sing !—
To stir thy silent golden wires
With touch of memories and desires.
Could I not even let thee sleep
In that Lethean empty deep
Of lifelessness where never beam
Of sun should slant athwart thy dream ?

" And yet perhaps, in later years,
In worlds beyond our joys and tears,
Thou and I, Brother, free and glad,
Shall both look back, not wholly sad
At thought of what on earth has been,
And dear desires we two have seen ;

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

At thought I woke you from the clay
To stir and hope your little day."

And then, touching no sweet responding chord
Tenderly over his harp his voice he poured : —

"Dreams which the heart doth hold,
Shall the later years forget ?
Days of the drifted gold,
Can ye change and wane and set ?
Let the stars go out and the sun wax cold,
But stay ye a little yet.

"Ye go ; but ye return
In secret fairer guise.
Lights that of old did burn
In but one woman's eyes
Now fold the world where the heart once yearned
For a far-off paradise.

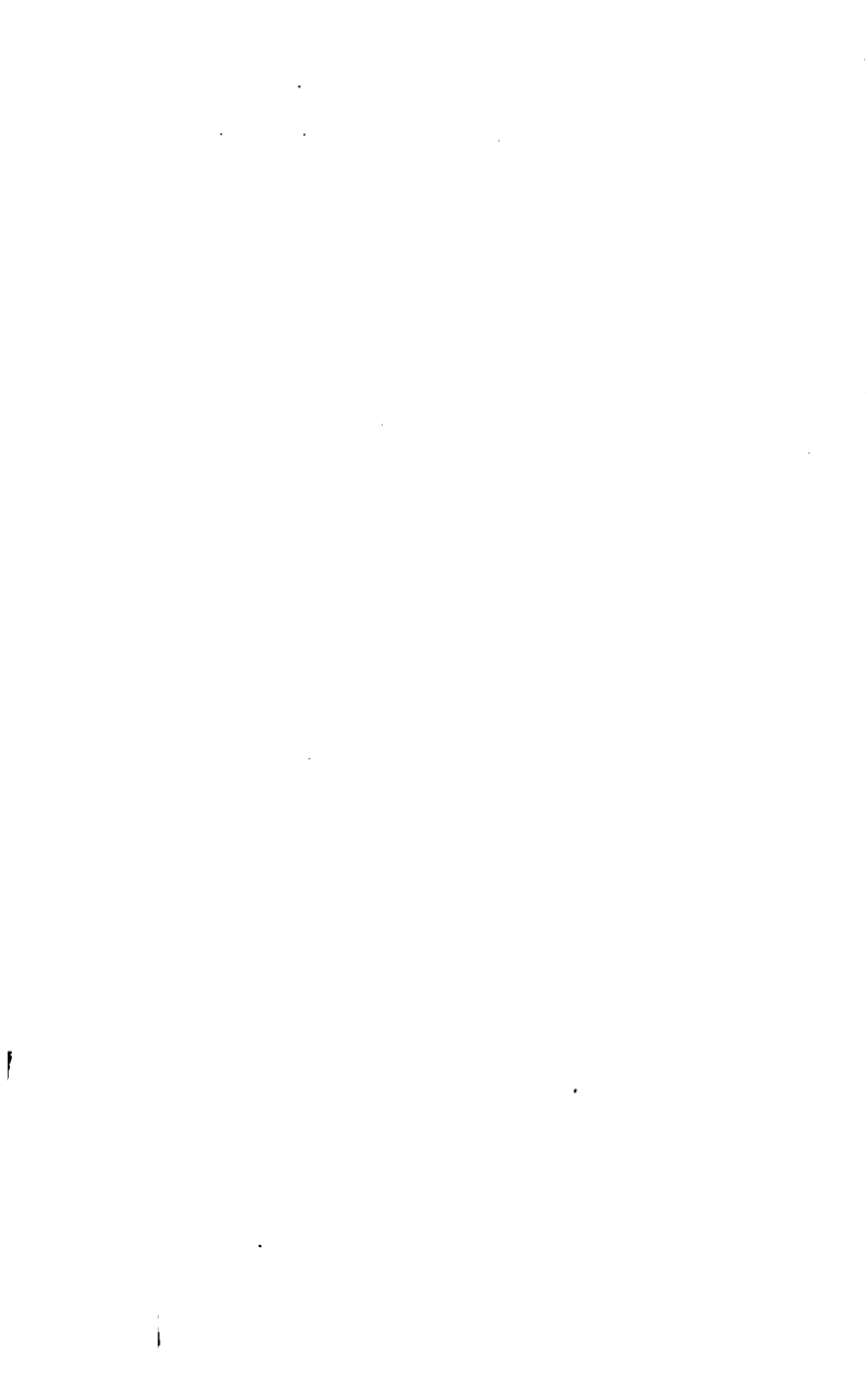
"But now the heart is still
With a foamless tide of peace.
Over the bourne and hill
The ancient questings cease.
And from the surge of its former will
The soul shall find release.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

“Not in the sky’s far gold
Is the fairest beauty set.
Love which the world doth fold,
Love without wane or set ;—
Let the stars go out and the sun wax cold,
But stay thou a little yet.”

And then he ceased ; and every note was still
Save thoughts that came the silences to fill.
As when in slope of autumn afternoon
Ere yet the sun is gone, a feather moon
More white than silver floats upon the sky
In crystal silence, while the dreaming eye
Of poet so is charmed that he knows
Not when or how the waning sunlight goes ;
And one by one the stars come ; and among
Her handmaidens, the moon, with censers swung
Solemnly round her, takes her lofty place
As queen of sky, and on her weary face
Shines an immortal ecstasy of light
And she moves slow out through the trackless
night.

POEMS



TO FANCY IN THE LATER DAYS

I

Yea, thee I call on, even as did that other
Greater than I in fate though like in aim,
To whom thou wert as loved breast unto lover.
Return, O Fancy, kindle me with flame
Like his, like thine. Not for the hope of fame
Or glory among men I ask it thee ;
But that I may rise passionate and free,
And from the peaks of my soul's liberty
Justify thy name.

For wearied of the hearths of home
Wearier still of days a-roam,
Unto thee the heart must turn.
And when dawn or even burn
Their soft lights of gray or rose,
Then again my forehead knows
Cool winds of thy starry sphere,
And the days of gold are here.

Linger by me at each hour.
Come to touch the bluebell's flower,
By a secret lovely change
Making it a palace strange,
Where the airy slender feet

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Of the faeries are more sweet
Than the perfume drifts from it.
Down the veined halls we glide
Where they flit and coyly hide.
But when they behold thee come
To their swinging drowsy home,
All their perfumes forth they bear,
All the dewdrops from their hair,
All their songs of silence rare.
And they lay them at thy feet,—
Bluebell gifts to one more sweet
Than the fainting breath of it.

O sweet Fancy, come with me
To the green depths of the sea.
Come with me upon this shore
Unto which the long waves roar.
We will watch the bright crests come,
Curling over into foam,
And the moment ere they fall
Dart into the clear green hall,
And there be shut within the cave
Of the glimmering hollow wave.
Through its galleries we go,
Past the groves where salt trees grow,
Over the sea-weed's ebb and flow.
We will come into the walls

TO FANCY IN THE LATER DAYS

Of those deep dim castle halls
Built of veinless emeralds,
Where dwell all things sweet and dead
That from the garish earth have fled.
There I know that we shall find
The lost voice of the night wind.
There will be the perfect note
Which has ever seemed to float
Just beyond the yearning reach
Of earthly music's trembling speech.
Ah, perhaps there will be there
Lights on long-dead sunny hair,
Loves that were for earth too fair !

II

If, O Fancy, thou wouldst bring
All these joys, that I might sing
Of their beauty, could I ask
More of thee who let me bask
In the dawn-light of thy smiles
Round about thy fairy isles ?

Yea, I ask thee for a greater
Harder boon,— a charm to bring
To a sadder world and later
All its youth's remembering ;

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

To bring back to wiser faces
Fervor of their youth's desire,—
Hope to seek the Silent Places,
Strength to find the Holy Fire.
For I know that thou canst fill
With thy passion every mind,
Touch the eyes that now are blind,
Wake the soul that now is still,
Make the deadened spirit thrill
Like a branch in April wind.

Thou hast loved the poet's dreaming
Haunted chamber, hushed and lone.
Now come forth where tides are streaming
Of stern life, where break and moan
In the streets these weary streams.
Leave the poet with his dreams.
He needs not thy loving beams
As do these, thy lost, thine own.

For they are sad and worn with too long
waiting
For the great word, the solving touch of life.
And all is sordid grown, — their rest, their strife,
Death and desire and the sweet bloom of mating
Are common things. And all their hope of life
Fades out into a pallor, and is gone.

TO FANCY IN THE LATER DAYS

III

They have forgot. The fairest things
Pall ; and they seek their joys in strife,
Panting for what the morrow brings,
The fleeting morrow of worn life.
The silences of twilight hours,
The voices of each woody spot,
The very beauty of small flowers,
They have forgot.

The sunset burns for them in vain.
To them the sacramental dawn
Is but new lease of trivial pain
Which must be drowned in pressing on
To strange fierce joys. No milder balm
Brings any easing of their lot.
The soft, the beautiful, the calm,
They have forgot.

They pray to God with hope of heaven ;
Yet nightly have no heart to see
Orion and the shining Seven
Move through the dusk's infinity.
— What if to them the death-hour brings
Knowledge which life has given not,—
That heaven lies in the little things
They have forgot ?

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

IV

Fancy, crowned in heaven of old,
Bring again thy sacred gold
That our days fade not in cold.
Cast thy light upon the flowers
Blooming round the weariest hours,
And in bosoms make thy home
Whence the visions all have gone.
Thou canst build that godlike state
Past the bitter blows of Fate ;
Thou canst make the heart stand free
Even from its own agony ;
And in the light thy coming brings
The soul looks up, Lo ! and has wings !

TO FELICIA

Roses have I never brought
 Passionately unto thee,
Nor in woodland valleys sought
 Violet or anemone.

What were flowers for that breast
 Where the whole Spring's melodies
Tremble softly out of rest?
 I have brought thee none of these.

But from gardens never stirred
 By the footsteps of the throng,
Silent save for one wild bird,—
 Lo! I bring thee now a song.

TO ALDEBARAN

I

Thou that glowest in the sky
With thy sullen smouldering light,
Like a red and angry eye
Burning through the black of night,—
Unto thee I sing my song
As the night winds pass along
From the west, where sank the sunset,
To the stretches of the dawn.

II

O Aldebaran, the red,
Casting down thy bloody glow,
Burning from the mad Bull's head
On the earth so gray below;
Wheeling slow above the west
When the world has gone to rest;
Brooding o'er the silent darkness
Where the low hills raise their crest,—

III

Take me on thy wings of fire
To the deep of darkness dim;
Let me quench my great desire

TO ALDEBARAN

Out upon the heavens' rim.
Plunge with me into the night
Hushed of sound and void of light
Where dead suns and wandering planets
Grapple in eternal fight.

IV

Where thou goest would I go,
Wheeling through the trackless gloom,
Into paths I cannot know,
Darker, stiller than the tomb.
And when brooding night is flown
In the carolling of dawn,
Let me follow thee forever
Through the wastes that are thine own.

V

Let me follow thee to spaces
Whence the earth shall fade afar.
In the vast aërial places
Let me find some untrod star
Where the silence is so deep
That the soul itself must sleep,
While across the heavens' mountains
Thou thy burning watch dost keep.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

VI

Then my night of ancient longing
Shall be swallowed in thy night.
In thy dusk, the shadows thronging
Through my dusk shall turn to light.
And perhaps in comets' flame
All my dreams shall make proclaim,
Fiery-borne along the darkness
To the darkness whence they came.

VII

And beyond all mortal things,
In the outlands of the sky,
Soaring on thy giant wings
I shall see the world pass by
Like a dream,— a pageant known
In the space one thought has flown.
And thereafter shall be silence
And the night that is mine own.

MAD SONG

The cold tree-tops and the wind and the stars
Are tangled together to-night ;
The sailing moon is blurred and bright
Behind the branches' bars.

The seven winds that dwell on the moon
To-night have all got free,
And they speed toward earth like a wraith on
the sea,
And their spell will reach us soon.

Is there any haven or holy hill
On earth or underground
Where I may hide from that dreadful sound
When their shrieks the air shall fill ?

Is there any darkness more close than night
Where I can steal away
That I may not see their ghost-light gray
Which turneth to stone the sight ?

And, oh, the touch of the seven moon-winds !
And, oh, their fingers cold and wan !
To every morrow those eyes are blind
Where the seven moon-winds have gone.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

They come ! I see them speeding adown
The moonlight's frozen track.
And when they go, I shall follow them back
Unto their terrible town.

I shall follow their starved and wailing faces,
Those faces blank of eyes,
Those faces that fill the gloam with their cries
In desolate soundless places.

Out from the tree-tops and tangled stars
I am drawn, I am going to-night,
To where the moon sails blurred and bright
Beyond the branches' bars.

ITALIAN PHANTASY

I

As the dark hills yearn toward Spring,—
As the summer swallow's wing
Turns to spaces of the South,—
As the poppy's glowing mouth
Cries for kisses of the sun
When Autumn days are almost done,—
As the heart too long aroam
Hungers for the peace of home,—
As the sea-gull turns to the sea,—
So turn I toward Italy.

And the ancient peace that bides
Somewhere in her crystal tides
Of southern pumice-isles ; or where
In the gold glow of Tuscan air
Florence slumbers ; or in the home
Of all dead splendid shadows, Rome,—
In one of these her peace doth wait.
And though the wanderer cometh late,
Cometh weary to her breast,
Her arms shall open, and give him rest.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

II

I dare not think of thee, my land
(Mine by the right of ancient love),
Where once the Master-Poet wove
His songs which the cold English strand
So long dared not approve.
It were enough that he has sung
Thy sunset-girdled hills among
That thou shouldst ever be
Sacred ; enough, that in thy deep
Silence he takes his dreamless sleep
Beside thine azure sea.

I dare not think of thee, who long
Hast held all singers captive there,
Bidding them weave each jewelled song
To star the glory of thine hair ;
Lest I should flee my destined hour
Beneath these cold gray northern skies,
And come to add my fragile flower
Unto thy splendid garlandries.
How holy seem thy garden-places
To me upon these northern plains ;
How full of dear undying faces
And shadows which my soul would greet,
Haunting thy evening rains !

ITALIAN FANTASY

One, chief amid the lyric choir,
When his short day was almost done,
Came to thee, that his sinking fire
At least might die beneath thy sun.
And through thy golden afternoons
The freshness of a thousand Junes
Has bloomed with lily and glowing rose
In Petrarch's quiet garden-close.
And through thy dusks one form has moved
Not ever after to be lost,
Who by the wind of Hell was tossed
To reach the haven of his love.

III

O land beloved,— when the flame
Of sunset on the Grecian coast
Shone like a dream not wholly lost,
From that most magic soil I came ;
From sea-winds and gray olive-trees ;
From cold clear heights and stony plains,
And what of ancient shrine remains
Yet more austere than these ;—
From Daulis and the land of Thrace
And the broad vales of Thessaly ;—
And turned with eager seeking face
Seaward, to thee, to thee.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

As once in purple-wingèd bark
Across the waves some Tyrian came,
So come I ; with the sunset's flame
 I steer into the dark.
Across the sea my galleys stream,
Into thy haven of sunny gold ;
Where the poplars quiver in the tender gleam
And the young is mingled with the old,—
The young pale Spring so beautiful
And the old land rich in its faded years,—
In its immortality of tears
And its fountains of dreams that are ever full.
Spring too has dreams ; but the tears not yet
Have made her lovely lashes wet.
And she looks half-wondering on thy head
Bowed with the memories of the dead.
The light of her eyes like the azure dawn
Across thy ruined graves is shed ;
And the cypress forgets its orison
 For the mighty that have gone. . . .
The vineyard-vales are green with fire
Of thin and tremulous leaves.
And in the tree-tops as a lyre
The Spring her music weaves.
Plain and river and terraced hill
Stir in the magic of her will.
There moves amid the feathery pines

ITALIAN FANTASY

A snow-breath from the Apennines.
The very towers which, mouldered brown,
From little citadels look down,
Forget the aging thousand years ;
And see again the gallant spears
That once they saw pass gayly by
In long-dead springtide pageantry.

IV

Then rises in the sunset west,
Shadowed beneath one mighty dome,
That city of dreams, that bourne of rest,—
Rome.

I come, where all have come sometime,—
All dreamers of the world's desire,
Whose eager color and glowing rhyme
Girdle the heart with fire.

St. Peter's hollow distances
Still echo with the countless feet ;
Again the chanting, solemn, sweet,
Floats with the incense-mysteries.
Through vaulted nave again is poured
The pageant of the sacrifice,
Lifting to alien peoples' eyes
The visible splendor of the Lord.
And on the heart with wonder shod

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

The outward pomp its spell doth weave,
Teaching the doubter to believe :—
How can such altar lack its God ?

As pilgrims came in earlier years
To lay before some shrine
The heavy burden of their tears,
 Take thou, O city, mine.
Let each thin circumstance and hope
Of mine own destinies
Fade in the all-dissolving scope
Of thine immensities.
In thy dark streets the troubled sense
Of marching myriads fills the breast.
The wayside fountains still attest
Some bygone Pope's magnificence.
On ruin is new ruin grown,
Builded above with later tower.
Scarce on the column roots the flower ;
For new life makes the wreck its own,
Lifting the present from the past,—
The dim cathedral from the heap
Where Cæsar's dust was laid asleep.—
Through death's gray arches life whirls fast.

Yet perfect peace one spot alone
Enfolds,— one spot, thy holiest one,

ITALIAN FANTASY

Where two high hearts at rest are laid, —
Where Shelley sleeps in cypress shade
And Keats beneath the sun.
The spring wind stirs the solemn trees,
But nevermore shall it awake
These eyes, nor linger for the sake
Of teaching them its melodies.
And the swift clamor sinks away
 By this calm bed ;
And all my thought moves with the dead ; —
 (Living, to-day !)
Till through the long years, tempest-tossed,
Those forms are hovering ; and I seem
To know all earthly shapes a dream
Beside your spirits loved and lost.

V

Giotto uplifted once a dream
From out his soul, — a dream so fair
That sudden rapture of the air
Enfolded it, and moonlight's gleam
Froze it to marble, that it stands
Now as a tower not built by hands,
 But reared of vision there.

And under it does Florence brood
On wonderful and secret things.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

All night she dreams : and when dawn flings
Its fire, she leaves her solitude
And moves half-trancèd through the day ;
And dusk returns to bring alway
Her old imaginings.

Yet here where Michael's Titan tomb
Strains with the sense of mastering doom ; —
Here, where the magic Lord of Line
Leads Spring in dances more divine
Than eyes have looked on ; — here may come
A sudden silence, to strike dumb
The over-gladsome ravishment
Which beauty on the heart has sent.
And on the deeper soul may fall
A fear, an emptiness, a pall. —
What do we dreaming in these halls,
Far from the world's onrushing stream ? —
They did not sit apart and dream,
The souls who wrought these miracles
Of woven color and moulded stone ;
But in the broad and noisy day
Brought forth, that it might last alway,
The vision each had seen alone.
Amid a harsh and living world
They sought no futile soft release ;
But moved within that vision's peace

ITALIAN FANTASY

Which through each poet-brain had whirled.
We lose our lives in maddened haste
Of labor for unworthy things ;
Or else, in dream-filled wanderings
Here on thy shore the fleet hours waste.
The sordid strain for store of gold ;
The poets move in worlds apart :
The days grow barren and sadly old ;
Pulseless the nation's heart.
Pulseless, except for common hope
And trivial clamor in the street.
The scholar keeps his hushed retreat ;
The men of toil in blindness grope.
Oh to awake the shining glory
Once fair beneath thy skies,—
To touch with light our modern story,
And bring that wisdom to our eyes
Which made the streets of Michael's Rome
Thrill with the breath of unseen things,
And threw on Florence like angel-wings
The mighty shadow of the Dome !
Dante, where art thou ? Michael, where ?
Teach us, amid these ancient stones,
That vision which alone is fair,
That beauty which for life atones.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

VI

Dream-girt and hushed, I turn from thee,
O well-belovèd Italy.

I leave green Capri ; and the pall
Where Venice's waters musical
Wash round a spectre-peopled bier ;
And Vallombrosa's forests sere.

I leave those haunts most dear to me,
Where fair Sorrento fronts the sea ;
Or where the Pæstum roses bloom ;
Or where Ravenna, veiled in doom,
Broods on the past continually ;
Or Rimini, whence One there came
To light love's sempiternal flame. . . .

Across the gray and wintry foam
The winds are calling in my home.
I go to them, for they are dear ;
But when thou callest, I shall hear.
Yea, far or near, once having heard
Thy musical voice, that secret word
Borne far across the barren seas
Is light and loveliness and peace.

THE RETURN TO AVON

Shakespeare speaks

The lute-strings crack a little,—is't not so?
Rare Ben is not so jovial as his wont,
And all the rest grow stiff. We mope and mowe
Our long hour on the stage, and tire our blood
For pleasuring the stalls. But the hour comes
When even blood would bear no needless freight
Upon its currents,—pleasures nor desires e'en,
Nor glittering dreams nor deeds. The end is
darkness

That scarce will cool the eye. Let it rest, then,
In the hours of afternoon, ere darkness come:—
Turn from the hurly-burly, not worn out,
But pausing from the bumpers.—

Ben will grow old,
Spite of his rage at th' telling. Marlowe's
gone;—

This many a Christmastide has lacked his face
And flying word. . . . And still the pit will
gape

Stupidly on the empty boards where ghosts
Do walk to shame the living. Last night they
cheered

Me,—or was it the servant who spoke — “Sir,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

The lady waits without," so bunglingly ?
What, had they hissed us both to oblivion,—
What then ? . . .

Old faces go ; London is lonely
For thought of some I know. In the loud street,
Behind all noises, waits the deep silence
Of voices gone ; and the clamor does not pierce
In the expectant brain as does that stillness.
Yea, we have bruited too, and with the throng
Made loud assail upon the hush,— even tried
To crowd that emptiness with busy meanings.
—And then the buskined phantoms of the day
Slip off their robes : — and silence alone lasts.

The meaning ? Hush ! They asked ; and they
are gone ;
And 't troubles them no more. The player takes
Silence as school in the end. And all the fury
Dies in the empty house. Wherefore ? — Go ask
Great Marlowe's Helen, or himself, — they know,
Perchance. For me, each actor's played his part
Heartily round me, and I knew each one, —
Perceived the speeches, moves, half of the heart, —
Each player's lines, I loved them. But what the
thread,
The plot, and who was hero. . . . — Ah, I'm dull,
It has escaped me. — Friend, drink up your glass,

THE RETURN TO AVON

Grasp the warm hand and build the impassioned
play,

Love, fight ; but question not of the greater play
For plot : it has none. — Great ! O God, its
greatness

Masters us ; but at close, no rounding off, —
Not tragedy nor laughter : — just an end
Of a tale unpurposed. There's the plotter still
Strutting the stage, — when lo ! the fury's over
and

No more, lady or king. . . .

At the end, flowers
Seem realer than the rest, and sweeter, maybe.
I would take ease now in a quiet garden
Not far from Avon, where the cowslips pearl
Grass in a shade of oaks. The labor's done,
Not well, but as I might, since no man may
Beyond crude measure do his work quite well.
The silence keeps by him, and makes his voices
Like raw cymbals. There's something left unsaid,
And silence says it, since we may not. There,
Out in that garden, flowers that dwell in silence
Know not of its oppression. I would go wreathed
Like a child, at the end. . . .

TO SLEEP

Thou timeless flood in which the leaves of
Time
Drop and are lost,— come thou to cool mine eyes
And let thine oblivious waves meet o'er my
head.

For I am weary with deep weariness.
And sorer than the thirst of starvèd lips
Is thirst in me for sleep,— for sleep and peace.
With a passion of yearning that is agony,—
With a clutching, a horror, a whole abandon-
ment,
I turn toward thee ; and every nerve and thought
Cries out for thee to come with thy cool flood
And quench the fearful embers of my soul.

There was a time I would have cried for
dreams,
Summoning the shapes of splendor and of doom
That haunt the crowded caverns of thy deep.
I am too weary even for these ; I cry
Only for thee and thy vast silences.
Thou timeless flood,— come thou to cool mine
eyes
And let thine oblivious waves meet o'er my
head.

PILGRIM VERSES

*" My face is set toward the islands and the sea,—
Toward dreams as old yet new as the spring world.
And all my weariness is fallen from me
And all my fair white hope-sails are unfurled;—
Yea, I will sail forth eager, strong, and free
To Isles round which the foam of dream lies pearled."*

The Poet Yôshi.



THE DREAMERS OF DZUSHI

The battered fishing-junks of Dzushi
Stand out each morn into the sea.
Each eve their lighted sails turn homeward
Slowly and wearily.

And from their dusky little doorsteps
The fishers watch where longest gleams
The sunset gold beyond white Fuji,
And dream long silent dreams.

A thousand sunny years have faded
Since that which brought the fateful day
When the ancient Dream of the Dreamers of
Dzushi
Rose on that quiet bay.

But the simple fishermen of Dzushi
Have never to this day forgot ;
Since for one among them, the doom of the
Dreamer
Waits, and he knows it not . . .

.

Misty autumn lay cool on Dzushi
After the flood of the summer rains.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

The beetle boomed at night no longer
On the lighted paper panes.

Old men wept to see the moonlight
Falling lovely across the door,
Calling it fairest of all the hundred
Summers had died before.

Young men sat by the low sand-levels
Watching the foam-born moonlight flowers ;
And sleep of night wove on unbroken
The dreams of their waking hours.

One splendid morn as the sun rose crimson
Out of the silken blue of the waves, —
As the fishing boats stood out past the beaches
And foaming water-caves, —

A maid who watched the sails grow smaller
Under the blue dome of the sky
Hid her face in her robe in terror, —
Wailed, and she knew not why. . . .

That eve the fisher-wives of Dzushi
Warmed the rice and saké sweet ;
Laid in order the fish and meal-cakes
That none should come to eat.

THE DREAMERS OF DZUSHI

Late at night the maids of Dzushi
Watched with fear by the silent foam
For those who unto the sands of Dzushi
Should never more come home.

The cold morn rose ; and one sail slowly
Drove toward the weary wailing place,
Bearing a man ; and the light of madness
Stood on his pallid face.

And he told to the awe-hushed wives and maidens
A tale as strange as the mad foam's bloom,
How those who had dreamed the Dream of Dzushi
Went to their unknown doom : —

“We had sailed past the cliffs of Kámakúra ;
Enóshima lay on the sea's clear rim ;
When a purple cloud rose out the water,
Glowing with fire-flakes dim.

“And a pillar of light like silver moonshine
Moved on the bright face of the deep,
And a perfume spread as when sandal-forests
Stir in their dusky sleep.

“And the cloud and the light moved out to
westward.
I longed to follow where they should go,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

For I thought they went to the Sea King's
garden,
I thought, but I did not know.

“I only know that I longed to follow ;
And from the boats a great shout rose : —
‘We have seen the dream that our hearts must
follow
To where the pearl-flower blows ;

“ ‘For it leads us beyond the great gray water,
Down to the jewelled coral throne
In the realm of the King and his foam-white
daughter,
Who will give us realms of our own !’

“And the cloud and the light moved over the
ocean.
Behind them all the raised sails sped.
But I closed my eyes, and with hard-thrown
tiller
Turned from their path and fled.

“They are gone with the light and the cloud of
purple
Along a path that I dared not go.

THE DREAMERS OF DZUSHI

And I think that they came to the Sea King's
garden,
I think, but I do not know."

.

Still in the sea-born town of Dzushi
The story lingers, like some old rhyme
In which as a vial is distilled the perfume
And bloom of forgotten time.

And once, 'tis said, in each generation
A fisher must dream that dream again.
In some one heart it rises sudden
When the autumn flowers wane,

That he goes, without a word of parting,
To seek the land in the purple west
Beyond to ocean, where waits the Sea King
To give him flowers of rest.

And if you ask strong men in Dzushi,
They laugh and call it but a tale
Woven of wandering twilight shadows
That hour the west lights pale.

But if you ask of the youths or old men,
Or maids, whose eyes see more than ours,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

They tell you the long-lost Dreamers are dwell-
ing
In peace 'mid the soft pearl-flowers.

And many a one of them looks to westward
And longs I know not how wistfully
That she were one of the Dreamers of Dzushi
In the garden beyond the sea.

THE BELOVED

After the Japanese of Yōshi

Cold and silver and secret, she mounts from the
purple sea-floor.

Slender and pale she moves through the tender
rose of the West.

O Moon so long beloved, O trembling secret
maiden,

O bride who comest cold to the flush of thy
bridal doors !

THE HOUSE OF THE POTTER

I

I do not know how I can answer you.
It is quite simple, an you have the skill,
To mould the hammered copper to its shape.
The beating and the joining you have seen ;
But just the rest, — the perfect form itself, —
There are no words to make you understand. . . .

One comes to think so much upon the Form.
At night the darkness gathers into shapes
At which the senses clutch, to tear them forth
From boundless space which so envelops them.
You are a painter ? — Ah, that is less hard.
You seek the line, the color ; but I strain
After the mass, as one who slowly breaks
A statue free from its enfolding stone.
The curve of the new moon, the drooping bough,
The slanting wave, — you paint them as they are.
But me they lead into the boundless dark,
The twilight place of uncreated Form.
At times I almost fear. For I must work
In this strange land of night where all is still,
And murky shapes tower dimly through the
gloom
And one might think to meet his own wan face.

THE HOUSE OF THE POTTER

Sometimes the Master comes to watch my work.
He himself makes, I think, not many shapes.
But once he praised a vase that I had wrought ;
And then with one sure change transformed its
mould
Into that dream which I had sought in vain.
And as he looked into my eyes, I knew
That he had seen the Form more clear than I,—
That he too knew the lonely twilight country.

II

Yea, I am he who makes chrysanthemums.
I think you watched me painting yesterday.
Ah, yes. To-day I work not, for my hand
Is not quite firm, nor do my eyes see clear :
And then the Master wills that none should
work.

Indeed, our little garden is so still
You would not guess the clatter of the street
Went on about it in the dusty sun.
That gold glow on the bamboos by the well,
How soft it is ! And here beside the pool's
Small islands and low faery promontories,
The light is such a russet as I long
To lay on that unfinished vase of mine.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

I do not draw the outlines, nor yet bend
The slender tracery of gold and silver.
The Master gives the pattern ; and a boy
Snips out the tracery,—'tis easy work,—
Amid his shining wires, piece by piece.
I lay the colors,—choose what grimy dust
Out of the little piles will fuse and melt
To pools of jewelled light around the vase.
That cloudy blue none makes as well as I ;
And I have heard the Emperor has praised
A certain yellow — like the open west —
I laid upon a bowl that went to him.
But more than all, chrysanthemums are mine.
In rusty gold and smoky purple-gray
And faintest lilac and pale sleeping white
They range around my vases. None but I,
And he, the Master, thus can make them rise
Frail as at autumn's touch.

— It is most strange : —
The youngest and the happiest of our house
Love best to paint the fierce unearthly shapes,—
Great blue-gold dragons on a field of green,
Or serpents coiling round the ocean world.
But those less joyful turn to trees and flowers,
The cherry and the iris and the pine,
The commonest growths upon our summer hills.

THE HOUSE OF THE POTTER

Once long ago in summer I too wrought
A dragon with an emerald in his mouth.
I thought that I should make such all my days.
But now I paint only chrysanthemums.

III

Ugh, what know I of what goes on within
The furnace at whose doors I have to sweat?
They only bring their pots for me to cook,—
To put into that fiery devil's mouth
And burn until the gritty sand runs smooth.
And meantime what a flood of sage advice
They pour upon me!— As if forty years
Had taught me nothing of my cursèd art.

But how they fear me! For they know I hold
The power to ruin all that work of theirs.
A log too much, a half a breath too long,
And it is flawed for them. And in my fire
Is tried, before a judge who never swerves,
The toilsome labor of their many days.
Where is the grain of dust, the faulty flux,
The uneven color that does not come forth
Out of my kiln increased a hundred-fold?
And then the Master comes with searching eye,
And with stern iron hammer breaks to bits

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

What was rejected by the fiery trial.
But when the flux is right, the color pure,
And each line clear, then all the fire's light
Seems frozen in them when they come from it.
See,—this is spoiled,—the fleck below the
flower :

But here's a vase that all will know as ours
Wherever you may take it in the world.

That green,— you see,—that green brings
back to me

A time of long ago, when night by night
The Master sat with me beside the kiln.
We fed the monster logs of pitchy pine
And watched the slow procession of the stars,
And for great fear spoke not a single word.
Then I grew ill, and still he watched alone;
I do not know what dreams watched by his
side.

Until one dawn he came to where I lay,
Almost recovered of my fever spell,
And speaking nothing, held before my face
A little cup on which the cloudy green
Flowed like a spotless lake among the hills.
I cried aloud and almost wept for joy:
But he said nothing, though he looked at me
As if the sunlight shone behind his eyes. . . .

THE HOUSE OF THE POTTER

It is a pretty color : oh, yes, yes.
I would not rank it higher than its worth.
— And here they come with more accursèd pots !

IV

You have not seen the Master ? Ah, how
strange !
You thought, then, he would stand within the
gate
To bargain with you on his latest vase ? . . .
— Nay, nay, forgive me. I am very old ;
And I have seen so many who have come
With chattering lips and prying sightless eyes
To look at him as at a juggler's show. . . .

He does not come among us often now.
Sometimes he enters to the working-room
And with a word, a look, a certain touch,
Rekindles those who toil for beauty there.
I, by the gate, do not look on him often.
But sometimes yonder, by the opened kiln,
I see him standing like a Deva King,
His stern just iron hammer in his hand.

Not twice a summer does he pass the gate.
Men praise him from the limits of the earth ;

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

And yet he seldom leaves the little house
Hid by the bamboos yonder in the garden.
It is not work, I think ; for when he draws,
The colored pattern or the outlined shape
Grows with a swiftness unbelievable.
A dozen days, and he could have complete
The plans for all the sixty little jars
That are our yearly harvest. Nay, I think
He cannot work through all the lonely days.

He used to be among us more than now.
Those were the years wherein his brain devised
The colors and the crucibles and tools
By which our house now execute his will.
His eyes are dimmer than they were of old.
He moulds no more, nor blends the pigment-
dust,
But only weaves those mysteries of line
And harmonies of color you have seen.
Sometimes at night I meet him by the pool,
Looking in silence through the silver depths ;
Or walking slowly down the autumn paths,
Dreaming some dream of which we cannot know.

I sometimes think that in this quiet place
He makes all a little like himself.
We do not greatly care for the loud world,

THE HOUSE OF THE POTTER

Nor praise of men. For what were all their
praise

To him who sees a color in his dreams
And spends his days to bring it down to earth ?
No heart among us is without its vision,
And is not beauty then enough for life ?
But I have often trembled with dim fear
To think what blinding majesty of light,
What forms and colors of another world
He must have seen who walks so lonely now,—
What pathways must be open to the feet
That pace the narrow confines of the garden.

AT ISE

When she was dead, and the votive tablets
Began to darken that bore her name,
He left the cheerless mountain village,
The hills that seemed no more the same,

And donned the faring pilgrim's garments ;
And turned his face toward the happy south
Where the Lord of Summer dwells forever
With a sunny smile on his poppy mouth.

But his was no glad path of summer.
No lighted meadow bloomed for him.
He trod strange lonely hills at noontide ;
At dusk, strange ways with shadows dim.

Men gave him rice or fruit or saké
Or fresh-caught fish, as each could spare.
The rains of eve fell coldly round him ;
The dews of night were on his hair.

Along the great Tokaido roadway
As by some unseen tempest blown,
He drifted 'mid the stream of travellers,
Silent and weary and alone.

And in the end won slowly onward,
Less live than dead, less man than wraith,

AT ISE

To where in Ise's valleys moulder
The strongholds of the Ancient Faith.

He passed the timeless groves of camphor ;
He passed the blessed Cleansing Stream ;
And saw amid the sacred cedars,
Beneath the torii's faded gleam,

That Shrine before all others holy,
Set in a wide sequestered glade.
And standing at the white veiled portal
He bowed his head and prayed :—

“ God who art sun and earth and sky,
My mother's heart, my father's spirit,
Unto whose ear the priests lift cry,
Lord of all life our souls inherit,—

“ Thou who art shadow over me
And shining light around my head,—
Give back one light to comfort me,
Bring back one living from the dead.

“ I fear the labyrinthine ways
Where in new shapes our souls are born,
Lest she and I may miss always,
Nor ever see the same white morn.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

“Thou who art judge of all the earth,
Who art the judged, who art the rod,—
Stay, of the countless, one rebirth ;
And praised be thou, the Unknown God.”

A thousand pilgrims came and went.
A thousand prayers rose from the Shrine
To Him whose eye as one beholds
The dawning and the set of time.

The years went by ; yet day by day
Steadfast before the holy place
He waited, in whose heart grew fear,
Though trembling hope shone on his face.

The camphor-trees are mouldering now.
A newer greater temple stands
Where stood the old ; and pilgrims come
To pray the prayers of many lands.

But as last night I walked the grove,
I heard before the temple stair
A voice that trembled on the dusk
With hopeless passion of faint prayer:—

“Shadow and light around our heads,—
Thou who art judge, and judged, and rod,—
Who are the living ? Who the dead ?
Who art thou, thou Unknown God ?”

MURAMADZU

A mouldering Buddha sits as warden
Beside the ruined mossy gate.
He must be rash, or strong with fate,
Who mounts unbidden to this garden.

The pine and cypress intertwining
Cover the lotus-pool with shade.
But where the ancient graves are laid,
A dreamy veil of sun is shining.

I do not know what shapes are here,
Nor why the sun so strangely shines. . . .
It is a place of ruined shrines. . . .
The distant wind is all I hear. . . .

What secret makes this place beguiling
I know not ; nor what visions lost
Stir like a frail forgotten ghost
While Buddha's lips are faintly smiling.

THE POET YÔSHI

"To his Songs"

The many shall never know you.
But few shall hold you dear.
In the deserts of earth where I sow you
You shall fade with the fading year.

You shall feel dark skies above you
And learn the lonely lot, —
Till you come to a heart that shall love you ;
And the rest shall be forgot.

KÔBÔ DAISHI'S FIRE

When Kôbô Daishi lit that fire
Whose sacred flame is burning still
Where Míyajíma, hill by hill,
Lifts from the waves to one gray spire,

He saw upon the sunset sky
A cloud-shaped dragon gray and gold
With scales along each monstrous fold
And eyes that glimmered balefully.

And as he looked, the moving air
Changed it and moulded in its place
A downcast pious trader's face
With lips that seemed to stir in prayer.

Then the Great Teacher turning spake : —
“ Full many times this shape shall come,
Stealthy or rampant, loud or dumb,
And many forms its soul shall take.

“ Though as a trader mild it move,
Or as a power to make you free,
Or bring you strength of land and sea,
Ye shall not give it aught of love.

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

“Let no gate open to its wiles.
It feeds upon all sweet content ;
Nor will it stay till it has rent
The ancient peace that makes your isles

“A place where each man can fulfill
His individual life with days
That lead through simple natural ways
Where deep unrestfulness is still.

“The dragon gives the vaunting boast,
The longing for un-precious things.
When you have grasped what gifts he brings,
Then shall you know what you have lost.”

.

Still burns, but low, the sacred fire.
Its shrine, though ruined, rises still
Where Míyajíma, hill by hill,
Lifts from the waves to one gray spire.

But the Great Teacher might not wait
Whose words so warning were of yore.
The sunset burns along the shore.
The dragon hovers at the gate.

BEFORE THE BUDDHA

From the poet Yôshi

Yea, Buddha, Teacher,— Buddha, Lord,—
Before thy calm and silent face
I also bow me in my place
And strive to hear the sacred Word.

Even as thou, in days ago,
Hast seen the pallor of all things,
So I have learned that seeking brings
No joy that may for life atone.

So I have seen the tangled plan
Of life and death which vain desire
Weaves with an all-pervading fire
Around the weary heart of man. . . .

Yea, having seen through all my days
No thing but changes and goes by,
I find none worth my agony ;
I turn unto thy silent ways ;

And deem that it enough shall be
Justly to live, nobly to dream,
Firmly to rule what soon shall stream
To thy unfathomable sea.

BUDDHA AT NÂDIKA

And Buddha came to where the sea
Curled silver-white upon the land,
And murmurs of infinity
Breathed on the sand.

And there lay shells like rosy foam
Borne from the caverns of the deep,
Frail playthings drifted from the home
Of timeless tideless sleep.

And on the sand a Fisher stood,
Drying his nets that late had seen
The silent caverns of the flood
And all the wastes between.

The Fisher lingered in his place
With countenance of mild surprise,
And looked upon the Buddha's face
With dumb uncomprehending eyes.

And Buddha spake : "Thy nets are drawn,
Thy boat rocks idle on the sea,
Thy day turns westward, and is gone. . . .
Come thou with me."

BUDDHA AT NÂDIKA

The Fisher marvelled,— “I must toil
With nets and shells among the caves,
To win the sea’s unwilling spoil
From the harsh waves.”

And Buddha answered : “Cast no more
Thy nets upon the troubled sea,
Nor gather shells along the shore.
Come thou with me.

“Thou drawest shells and curious flowers
From out the blue untrodden caves.
Thou seest the passing of the hours.
Thou hearest the clamor of the waves.

“Thou openest the shell where lies
The pearl more white than driven spray.—
And trackless past thy vision flies
Each passing day.

“But I will teach thee not to stir
The shell nor flower in its sleep.
For thou shalt roam the sepulchre
That chasms all their native deep.

“And vain desire, like terror grown
Deep in the chambers of thy breast,

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Shall be from thee forever flown,
And thou shalt rest.

“No search for pearls shall blind thy thought,
Nor waves, with clamorous harmonies.
But in the silence where is naught
Thou shalt behold the One that is.

“And where thy days now speed like foam
Across thy vision, there shall be
For thee a vast eternal home,—
An Infinite Sea.”

The Fisher looked on Buddha dumb,—
Looked deep into that tender gaze,—
Those eyes within whose depths had come
And gone the sorrows of all days.

He looked uncomprehendingly,
And wearily he shook his head;
And turned once more to drag the sea,
Knowing not what the Buddha said.

THE OLD CALL

When our northern streets are dumb with
sullen cold
And the brightest hearthfire somehow fails to
cheer ;
When you feel the tragic passing of the year,
And the world you know seems worn and sad
and old ;—
Then turn from where the spirit's youth is
dying,—
Breast the night, the stars, the wind, the break-
ers' roar ;
Follow questionless that word the heart is
crying
Till it brings you to the sun-hills of Johore.

Leave the city ; turn you inland
Past the line of tree-fringed shore,
Where the snow-white herons ponder,
Blinking, poising at Johore.
And the white clouds pile to eastward
And the clean hot sunshine lies
Like a fire along the landscape,
Bringing glow to weary eyes.
Sun-floods make the blood beat fuller,
Pour their lightnings through your brain ;

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Let you throb with wave and river,
Stir and sleep with palm and plane.
And the storms march up in columns
From the shining Indian Sea ;
And at night the heat-glare flashes
Instant bright on cloud and tree.
Deep the green,— oh, never deeper.
And the crimson flowers flame
Through their leaves like Nature's day-dreams.
And you dream, till whence you came,
Where you go, are severed from you
And your glad soul fain would soar
Where the white doves whirl and circle
Through the sunshine of Johore. . . .

Go you hence and lift your burden ;
Tread the path that has been set.
Leave the sunshine, leave the sea-wind,
Leave the palm-trees, and forget.
—And forget !— Except when June winds
Stir the pulses of the world,
And a longing thrills the tree-trunks,
Thrills the leaves but half uncurled ;
Comes and whispers at your window
When the morning dews are wet ;
Breathes upon your weary forehead
When the green-gold sun has set.

THE OLD CALL

It will reach you in the northland,
It will touch you though you die,
It will draw your heart's unutterable core
Through the night, the stars, the breakers,
To the sun, the heron's cry,
With the calling, calling, calling of Johore.

ON A PERSIAN TILE

Where would you ride, O knight so bold,
 Decked in your youth's glad panoply ?
In robe of rose with thread of gold,
 As for some gallant holiday ?
Do you not know that long of old
 Your Shah's great pageant moved away ?

And still you ride your prancing steed,
 And still your laughing eyes are bright.
Is it because you have small need
 Of aught save of your own delight
That you remain while empires bleed
 And turn to shadows down the night ?

I love you, and I know not why.
 I have passed by the loftier face
Of a king stern in majesty,
 And of a poet. To your place
I come. You only could not die,
 But ride and ride with old-time grace.

And it avails not that I tell
 To you how all your pomps are fled ;
That lovely eyes you loved so well

ON A PERSIAN TILE

Long since have joined the weary dead ;
How all your lords and princes fell
And over them the flowers are shed.

O laughter in the face of Time,
O you who linger down the years,
Eternal in your eager prime,
Lord of mortality's dim fears,—
I wonder, does your heart not pine
Sometimes for boon of human tears ?

Would you not wish, if wish you could,
That there might sometime come a day
When you could doff your merry mood
And weep a little for the clay
To which has turned your princes' blood,
To which your ladies stole away ?

THE DEVIL DANCERS

A Thibetan Folk-song

The shrilling Devil Dancers came
 With shuffling feet.
They called upon you by the name
 That was so sweet.
With great ghost-daggers in their hands
 They wove a spell
 Whereof they said, not Hell
Nor Heaven itself could loose the bands.
 . . . And was it well ?

Like some great ghost who heaves and spills
 The shaken ground,—
Like a thunder-demon of the hills
 They would have bound
You who were wont beside my bed
 To bring me peace
 Which alone gave release
From terrors that, since you were dead,
 Never could cease.

The grinning Devil Dancers came
 With shuffling feet.
They said,—“It is a thing of shame
 That now so sweet

THE DEVIL DANCERS

Should seem a ghost that weaves you bands
Of some vile spell.”
And they cursed by Heaven and Hell
With the great ghost-daggers in their hands . . .
It was not well !

Since then I watch awake all night,
But no one comes.
The stars pass and there breaks the light.
The thundering drums
Of the Devil Dancers rise and fall
As the dawn grows ;
And on the wind that blows
Down from the heights comes the keen chill
call
Of the changeless snows.

And I have come at the far white call ;
And now I stand
Here where the mountains' rocky wall
On either hand
Stretches away to west and east,
Snow-peak on peak,
Till the senses would grow weak,
Were it not that here I must stand as priest
With all to seek !

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

Here the Devil Dancers cannot come.

— I will seek, and find !

On these breathless snows all things are dumb

Save the wind,—

The wind that came from this haunted height

Only to tell

That what not Heaven nor Hell

Could loose, I can loose, in the plunge to-
night. . . .

And it shall be well !

THE CITY OF AMBÈR

Perhaps it was on such a day
That, ceasing in his loving thee,
Thy splendid Rajah went away
Amid his golden pageantry ;
And left thee for the rains to gray
With winds for all thy company.

Thy carven balconies are bare,
Nor princesses now lean from them.
And never more their garments' hem
Sweeps through thy halls. Ah, never there
Shall sunlight gleam upon the hair
That was thy loveliest diadem.

And on thy battlements the word
Of armèd men is wholly dumb.
And dumb the sweet ring of the sword.
And for a guest who does not come
Thy gates stand open,— for the lord
Who long ago passed out therefrom.

The gray ape clammers in the sun
And laughs like madness on thy walls.
At dusk the proud blue peacock calls

THE HAPPY PRINCESS

And plumes his feathers one by one.
And lizards timorously run
Through the pale moonlight of thy halls.

Thou knowest not. A dream is thine
Of that great day when in his state
Thy Rajah passed the valley-gate
With gold-decked elephants a-shine,
With all the life that warmed like wine
Thy courts and galleries of late ;

And down the crowded causeway bore
Thy blood, thy life, away with him.
— What was the look that then he wore
As passing o'er the valley's rim
He turned from thee to come no more,
And left thee to thy twilight dim ?

Ambèr, no man shall fathom thee.
Some mystery of ancient pain
Is on thee. Though thy splendors wane,
Thou seemest not ruined utterly,
But waiting till his pageantry
Return to make thee glad again.

THE WILD DUCK

A Japanese Frieze

The heron rises and circles,
The wild duck steadily flies
Past the shadowy lake and marshes
Toward the yellow western skies.

The ripples murmur and travel
Outward in golden lines.
A wild duck flaps from the marshes
And rises over the pines.

Shadows sink on the woodland
Mistily deepening more.
A wild duck flies toward the sunset.
A wild duck lifts from the shore.

I am lone in this land of marshes ;
I wander its silent streams,
Where I hear but the wild duck calling
And see but the yellow gleams.

Dark comes on the quiet waters,
The pine-trees sink in haze.

